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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2205
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3078
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1374
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3421
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2807
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000484

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ LAMENT DECLINE IN FREEDOM TO STAFFDEL

REF: A. BISHKEK 458

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 43

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Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During the May 2-8 U.S. Helsinki Commission staffdel visit, a prominent human rights activist described government curbs on freedoms as well as her expectation that "administrative resources" would be used to benefit incumbent President Bakiyev in the July 23 Presidential election. The owner of the internet AKIPress news agency outlined plans to move his website out of the Kyrgyz Republic in order to escape ongoing government pressure to censor his news agency's reporting. Other meetings with the OSCE and UNDP identified shortcomings in law enforcement and environmental issues. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) U.S. Helsinki Commission staff members Janice Helwig and Shelly Han, accompanied by Embassy personnel, had meetings in Bishkek as part of their May 2-8 visit to the Kyrgyz Republic. Reftel A covers their meetings in Osh, while this cable and others will detail their discussions in Bishkek.

OSCE BISHKEK

[1](#)3. (C) The OSCE Community Policing Officer advised the staffdel of very incremental progress in shifting local police organizations' focus from "protecting the authorities from the public" to serving the public. In a visit to the OSCE Academy, the staffdel met students from throughout Central Asia, including Afghanistan, who study in the OSCE's Masters in Political Science program. In 2008, over 300 applicants competed for the 25 available slots.

FOREIGN ENTITIES PROTECT THE KYRGYZ ENVIRONMENT

[1](#)4. (SBU) After describing a severely under-resourced Kyrgyz

ecological agency, two United Nations Development Program environmental coordinators told the staffdel that the Kyrgyz government relies upon international organizations, such as the World Bank and various U.N. agencies, to meet obligations to U.N. and Kyoto environmental conventions. International donors, they said, finance and operate most environmental projects in the Kyrgyz Republic.

HR ACTIVIST DESCRIBES COUNTRY'S DOWNWARD SPIRAL

15. (C) Human rights activist Aziza Abdrasulova highlighted the Kyrgyz Republic's backward slide on democracy and human rights issues, and described the government's attempts to curb citizens' freedoms. She specifically cited new laws on broadcast media and religious freedom (Ref B), as well as a draft NGO law that threatens to prevent civil society from participating in election-related activities. Abdrasulova told the staffdel that "administrative resources would most certainly be used" during the July 23 Presidential election, noting that the May 1 Ak Jol Party Congress, where incumbent President Kurmanbek Bakiyev received the Party's nomination, attracted prosecutors, judges, school rectors, and other government personnel.

16. (C) Abdrasulova described the May 5 meeting between President Bakiyev and civil society organizations as a "farce" because of the limits imposed on discussion topics. She blamed the introduction of numerous restrictive laws for an uptick in Kyrgyz citizens seeking political asylum abroad. Abdrasulova believed that the Kyrgyz Republic is becoming more closed to outsiders, citing recent instances of foreign journalists and human rights activists being denied entry

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into the country by the Kyrgyz border authorities.

AKIPRESS DIRECTOR ON THE PERILS OF FREE SPEECH

17. (C) Marat Tazabekov, founder and owner of the AKIpress internet news agency, which receives two million hits per month, said that Kyrgyz authorities, including the White House, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the State Committee for National Security, regularly pressure him to censor his news site's content. He noted frequent threats to have his agency shut down and mysterious cyber attacks on the agency's server. Further, Tazabekov stated that in February 2009 he began the process of relocating the agency's website outside of the Kyrgyz Republic. Commenting on recent physical assaults on local journalists, Tazabekov speculated that the attacks were a mix of government harassment and street crime.

18. (U) Staffdel Helwig did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.
GFOELLER